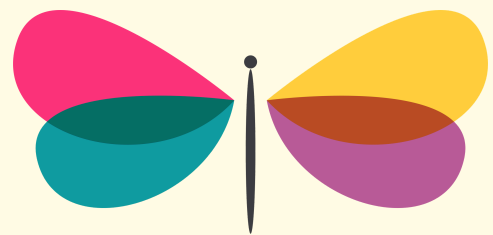


responding to
**hurricane
priscilla**

final report | march 2026

Our community-led response to the Sierra Otomí-
Tepehua-Nahua's worst natural disaster in decades



PSYDEH
Psicología y Derechos Humanos



about PSYDEH

Psicología y Derechos Humanos A.C. (PSYDEH, pronounced see-day) is a Mexican grassroots nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering rural and Indigenous women as community leaders addressing social, economic, and gender inequalities in rural Hidalgo and Puebla, Mexico.

PSYDEH accompanies and empowers rural and Indigenous women in Hidalgo and Puebla as community leaders to address local social, economic and gender-based inequality by becoming empowered citizens, leaders, entrepreneurs, and organizers.

You can learn more about PSYDEH and our work [here](#).

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executive summary

Between 6-8 October 2025, Hurricane Priscilla struck the Sierra Otomí-Tepehua-Nahua of Hidalgo and Puebla, triggering severe landslides, flooding, and the isolation of more than 90 rural communities across the region.

Entire municipalities were cut off for weeks. Roads collapsed, electricity services failed for nearly 20 days. Food and medical access were severely disrupted. The disaster exposed longstanding structural vulnerabilities in the region, including limited infrastructure, weak emergency response capacity, and geographic isolation.

Drawing on nearly two decades of presence in the region, PSYDEH activated its Disaster Resilience Plan, mobilizing local teams, volunteers, and partner organizations to deliver urgent assistance.

Between October and December 2025, PSYDEH's coordinated response:

- Reached **2,717 families (11,528 people)** across the region.
- Distributed **1,541 food packages** and **6,500 protein supplements**.
- Delivered **5,548 liters of milk and emergency supplies**.
- Provided **medical attention to 1,261 people** through mobile medical brigades.
- Maintained **satellite communications and solar-powered connectivity** in isolated communities.

PSYDEH's response reached approximately 10% of the total regional population, focusing particularly on remote communities that remained outside the reach of government assistance.

This report summarizes the emergency context, PSYDEH's response, key outcomes, and priorities for the reconstruction and resilience phase.

situation and background

The Sierra Otomí-Tepehua-Nahua region is one of Mexico's largest Indigenous territories, characterized by mountainous terrain and dispersed rural communities. Limited infrastructure, underinvestment, and difficult geographic conditions have historically restricted access to public services and economic opportunities.

Hurricane Priscilla intensified rapidly due to unusually warm ocean conditions and delivered nearly 500 millimeters (20 inches) of rain in 48–72 hours.

The consequences were devastating:

- More than 90 communities isolated.
- Around 1,000 homes damaged.
- Major roadways destroyed by landslides.
- Electricity outages lasting nearly three weeks.
- Regional medical centres rendered inoperable.
- Economic activity suspended for more than 20 days.
- 76 confirmed fatalities across Mexico, with 21 in Hidalgo alone.

Food shortages began just days after roads were blocked, while communication systems collapsed across much of the region.

Despite early warnings, institutional response was slow and uneven, leaving many communities dependent on informal networks (eg. mobile phones and social media) and civil society support.

As a result of the damage and interruptions caused, Hurricane Priscilla is considered to be the most devastating natural disaster in the region for decades.

“The hurricane was very strong; we were completely cut off and without power, with a lot of damage. We were scared, isolated. Something that we had never experienced before and will never forget.”

Floriberta Montes, member of the Ya Bombe Uedi Kona Mui Cooperative
San Antonio El Grande, Huehuetla, Hidalgo

A damaged elementary school in Huehuetla, Hidalgo.

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Damaged homes in Huehuetla, Hidalgo.

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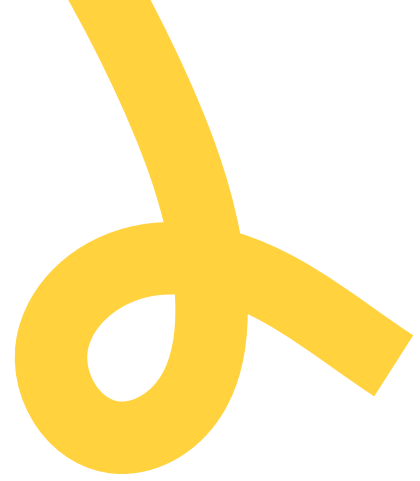


Residents use all-terrain vehicles to pass through landslide-damaged roads in Tenango de Doria, Hidalgo.

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PSYDEH response



PSYDEH mobilized immediately through both its regional team in Hidalgo and its coordination team in Mexico City, combining local knowledge with external partnerships to deliver aid in isolated communities.

Understanding community needs

Following the hurricane, PSYDEH conducted a rapid needs assessment among members of the Red Sierra Madre cooperatives and affected communities in the municipalities of Huehuetla, San Bartolo Tutotepec, and Tenango de Doria. The assessment sought to better understand the immediate impacts of the disaster, as well as pre-existing vulnerabilities that shaped communities' ability to respond and recover.

Through surveys and community consultations, PSYDEH gathered information on household preparedness, infrastructure damage, economic disruption, access to services, and community organization. The findings helped identify critical gaps, particularly in emergency preparedness, healthcare access, communication infrastructure, and economic stability, and informed the design and prioritization of PSYDEH's emergency response and recovery strategy.

Becoming a hub for the community

During the first weeks following the hurricane, PSYDEH transformed its offices and buildings into emergency coordination hubs. Critical actions included:

- Opening our HQ office in Tenango de Doria and six digital resource centers across the region to communities and emergency responders so they were able to access electricity and reliable internet connection. These centers were critical for community members to charge their personal devices, contact loved ones in and out of the region, and served as disaster response organization hubs to plan the recovery to the hurricane.
- These centers also served as community hubs to help to plan the response to the hurricane, supporting local teams in rescue operations and patient transport.

These communication hubs became some of the only operational communication channels in the region during the first weeks of the emergency.

Distributing essential food and non-food items

Leveraging existing and new partnerships, PSYDEH coordinated relief efforts with civil society partners, donors, universities, and volunteers to attend to needs identified through the needs assessment.

Through these partnerships, PSYDEH was able to distribute:

- 1,541 food packages and 6,500 cans of tuna and sardines (in coordination with CENACED).
- 5,548 liters of milk (in coordination with CENACED).
- Significant quantities of clothes, uniforms, and blankets (in coordination with CENACED).
- Additional food and non-food items collected from donation centers across Mexico City and other regional locations.
- 20 specialized medical backpacks (in coordination with Direct Relief and Medical Impact).
- 250 hygiene kits (in coordination with Direct Relief and Medical Impact).
- Provided medical attention to 1,261 people through mobile medical brigades (in coordination with Medical Impact).

These collaborations allowed PSYDEH to mobilize humanitarian support quickly despite extremely limited road access and ongoing challenging weather conditions.

Expanding our reach in the face of disaster

To expand field capacity, PSYDEH established a volunteer Disaster Response Brigade composed of local staff, community members, and university volunteers.

Brigade activities included:

- Distribution of food and emergency supplies to isolated communities
- Coordination with federal emergency brigades and municipal authorities
- Delivery of medical supply backpacks to emergency responders
- Monitoring the functioning of communication infrastructure
- Reaching communities outside the primary focus of federal aid

Using PSYDEH vehicles, public buildings, and community homes as logistics hubs, the brigade enabled aid to reach remote communities that remained inaccessible to many external actors.

PSYDEH staff assist community members utilizing satellite internet and electricity at PSYDEH HQ in Tenango de Doria, Hidalgo.

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Donated emergency items at Tenango de Doria Municipal Auditorium, Hidalgo, ready for distribution.

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PSYDEH and partners meet with Protección Civil in Tenango de Doria, Hidalgo.

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results and findings

SUCSESSES

Rapid mobilization and local response capacity

PSYDEH was able to mobilize quickly following Hurricane Priscilla due to its established presence in the region and the immediate activation of its Disaster Resilience Plan. The organization's regional team rapidly assessed community needs, coordinated with local leaders, and began supporting emergency response activities despite road blockages and communication failures. This rapid mobilization ensured that assistance began reaching communities during the critical early stages of the crisis.

Trusted community relationships and networks

Nearly two decades of accompaniment in the region meant that PSYDEH was already deeply embedded in community networks. These relationships enabled the organization to maintain communication with cooperative members and community leaders during the emergency and to identify priority needs quickly and accurately. Community members consistently recognized PSYDEH's presence and support during the crisis, reinforcing the organization's reputation as a trusted partner that remains present before, during, and after emergencies.

“PSYDEH's level of response surprised us. Why? Because we couldn't believe that so many people from the state of Hidalgo would stand by us and our communities in solidarity. Really, that support was constant. It strengthened us and it relieved us.”

Irma Hernández, member of the Sihume Tekikame cooperative
Zoyatla de Guerrero, Pahuatlán, Puebla

Filling critical infrastructure gaps

PSYDEH's investment in solar-powered digital centers and satellite connectivity proved essential during the emergency. When electricity and telecommunications networks collapsed across much of the region, these systems became some of the only functioning communication points available to communities. Families were able to contact relatives, local authorities could coordinate response efforts, and emergency information could circulate despite widespread infrastructure failure.

“For us it was of such assistance, given that [PSYDEH] were the only ones who offered us their support, they were the ones who did not forget us artisans. And honestly, we are so grateful to them for the support they gave us, and for at least asking us how we were [following the hurricane].”

**María de los Ángeles, member of the Sihuame Tekikame cooperative
Barrio Tlatzintla, Acaxochitlán, Hidalgo**

Effective partnership mobilization

The response demonstrated PSYDEH's ability to mobilize and coordinate diverse partnerships under emergency conditions. The organization rapidly secured financial support, humanitarian supplies, and medical services through collaboration with civil society organizations, universities, donors, and volunteers. These partnerships allowed the response to scale quickly and ensured that food, medical care, and essential supplies reached communities that would otherwise have remained without assistance.

Culture and community as a source of resilience

Despite the challenges identified, the assessment also revealed strong cultural values of solidarity and mutual support. In moments of crisis, families and neighbours prioritised caring for one another, sharing food, and assisting those most affected. This culture of mutual aid played a crucial role in helping communities navigate the immediate aftermath of the hurricane. Strengthening and organizing these existing social bonds may therefore be one of the most effective foundations for building long-term community resilience to future climate events.

“After a situation [like this] is when one most values people, and everyone comes together. It's important to take good care of each other and remember that we will always need each other's support.”

**Cirila Martínez Patricio, member of the Yu danxu mpefi di tõi cooperative
Piedra Ancha, San Bartolo Tutotepec, Hidalgo**

CHALLENGES

Limited emergency preparedness

One of the clearest findings of the assessment was the absence of disaster preparedness training in the region. Most respondents reported that they had never received guidance on how to prepare for or respond to extreme weather events. As a result, when Hurricane Priscilla struck, households largely relied on instinct and informal community support rather than structured emergency plans. While many women expressed confidence in their ability to protect their families in general terms, the hurricane exposed the lack of practical knowledge, early warning mechanisms, and community-level preparedness strategies needed to respond effectively to an emergency of this magnitude.

Weaknesses in formal disaster preparedness and response systems

Although strong networks of family and neighbour solidarity exist, the assessment highlighted limited formal community organization around disaster response. In many communities, collective coordination during the hurricane was minimal, with most households responding independently or relying on immediate family members for support. Women played central roles in caregiving and food preparation during the emergency, while men were more often involved in reconstruction or physically demanding tasks. The findings suggest that while social cohesion remains strong, there is significant opportunity to strengthen collective organisation and community-led disaster preparedness mechanisms.

The assessment also highlighted a perception among many residents that institutional responses to climate emergencies remain insufficient. Participants reported limited information about government policies or programmes related to disaster preparedness and prevention, and many expressed scepticism about the capacity of local authorities to effectively respond to future emergencies. While some institutions did provide support during the crisis (eg. Protección Civil), communities largely relied on family networks, neighbors, and civil society organizations for assistance. These findings suggest the need for stronger coordination between communities, civil society, and public institutions to build more effective disaster response systems.

Vulnerable infrastructure

Infrastructure limitations significantly amplified the impact of the hurricane. Many communities in the region already face difficult road access due to mountainous terrain and seasonal rains. When landslides blocked the few available routes, entire communities were cut off from essential services for extended periods. The assessment also confirmed significant gaps in public services, including the absence of nearby health clinics in many communities, limited reliable power and internet connectivity, and a lack of emergency response services. These structural conditions meant that when electricity and communications failed, communities had few alternative channels to access information, medical care, or emergency assistance.

Damage to livelihoods

The hurricane also exposed the fragility of household economies in the region. Many families depend on a combination of subsistence agriculture, informal labor, and small-scale artisanal production to generate income. These livelihoods are highly sensitive to climate events, and the destruction of crops, productive land, and local infrastructure immediately disrupted economic activity. For women participating in cooperative enterprises, the interruption of production and market access threatened both household income and the sustainability of community-based initiatives developed over many years. The findings underscore the importance of strengthening economic resilience and diversification in the face of increasingly frequent climate shocks.

The climate emergency is here

Community members widely reported experiencing changes in local climate patterns in recent years, including stronger storms, irregular rainfall, droughts, and increased landslides. While many respondents were unfamiliar with the technical terminology of “climate change,” their understanding of environmental shifts was grounded in direct lived experience. These changes are already affecting agricultural production, access to water, and the safety of housing and land. Hurricane Priscilla reinforced concerns that extreme weather events are becoming more intense and less predictable, creating growing uncertainty for communities that depend heavily on natural resources for their livelihoods.

looking forward

Hurricane Priscilla underscored both the resilience of communities in the Otomí-Tepehuana region and the structural challenges they face in responding to increasingly intense climate events. While the emergency response helped address urgent needs, the scale of the disaster also revealed important gaps in preparedness, infrastructure, and access to essential services. As climate-related disasters become more frequent and unpredictable, strengthening community resilience will be essential to protecting livelihoods, health, and local development.

PSYDEH's next phase of work will therefore focus not only on recovery, but on building the capacities, systems, and partnerships needed to reduce vulnerability to future emergencies.

Expanding resilience community infrastructure

The emergency response demonstrated the importance of reliable communication and energy infrastructure in remote communities. Solar-powered digital centres and satellite connectivity proved critical in maintaining communication when conventional systems failed. Building on this experience, PSYDEH will seek to expand and strengthen these community infrastructure hubs so that they can serve as local resilience centres—providing access to communication, information, and coordination during emergencies while continuing to support digital inclusion and community development in normal conditions.

Supporting economic recovery and livelihoods resilience

The hurricane severely disrupted local livelihoods, particularly those linked to agriculture, artisanal production, and informal labor. PSYDEH will continue strengthening women-led economic initiatives through its regular programming, such as the Sierra Solidaria Fund and the Red Sierra Madre cooperative network, which support members to rebuild productive activities, restore income streams, and diversify economic opportunities. Strengthening local economies is a key component of long-term resilience, enabling households to better withstand future shocks.

Addressing gaps in healthcare

The disaster also highlighted critical gaps in healthcare access across the region, particularly in remote communities where medical services are already limited. In response, PSYDEH is strengthening its focus on health, in particular in strengthening community access to basic healthcare through strategic partnerships with humanitarian and medical organizations. Building on collaborations established during the emergency response, this initiative will seek to expand periodic medical brigades, strengthen health education, and improve coordination between communities and health service providers.

Strengthening partnerships for regional resilience

PSYDEH will continue strengthening partnerships with civil society organizations, academic institutions, donors, and private sector actors to support the region's recovery and resilience-building efforts. The emergency response demonstrated the power of collaboration in reaching isolated communities and mobilising resources quickly. Expanding these partnerships will be essential to sustaining recovery efforts and building the systems needed to better anticipate and respond to future climate events.

Hurricane Priscilla was a profound challenge for the communities of the region. Yet it also reaffirmed the strength of collective action and the importance of long-term community accompaniment. By continuing to work alongside local leaders, cooperative members, and partners, PSYDEH remains committed to supporting communities as they rebuild, adapt, and strengthen their capacity to face the uncertainties of a changing climate.



Teams from PSYDEH and Direct Relief meet with municipal police in San Bartolo Tututepec, Hidalgo, to discuss the hurricane response and strengthen local partnerships.

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final remarks



Teams from PSYDEH and Direct Relief observe as the Mexican Army clears debris from a flood-affected street in Huehuetla, Hidalgo.

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The response to Hurricane Priscilla demonstrated both the profound vulnerabilities facing rural and Indigenous communities in the Otomí-Tepehua-Nahua region and the extraordinary strength that emerges through solidarity, organisation, and collaboration. While the hurricane brought loss, disruption, and uncertainty, it also revealed the importance of trusted community networks and the role that civil society organizations can play in bridging critical response gaps.

PSYDEH remains deeply committed to accompanying the communities of the region in the months and years ahead: supporting the recovery, strengthening resilience, and ensuring that the lessons of this crisis translate into stronger systems, greater preparedness, and more secure futures for the families who call the Sierra home.

acknowledgements

PSYDEH expresses its deepest gratitude to:

- The committed and courageous **members of the Red Sierra Madre cooperatives**, whose leadership and local knowledge were fundamental for delivering help to those who needed it most.
- **The volunteers who donated their time and effort** in transport, logistics, and distribution of supplies, showing that regional support always comes from solidarity.
- **The communities of the Sierra Otomí-Tepehua-Nahua** for their resilience and solidarity in the most difficult moments.
- **Indígenas 3D**, whose Emergency Fund was an essential catalyst for the initial response and the formation of the PSYDEH Brigade.
- **CENACED**, for the generosity of donations and resolute partnership during an exceptionally challenging time for our region.
- **Direct Relief**, for their management, guidance, and support throughout the rapid response process, inside and outside the region.
- **Medical Impact**, for their professionals, their efforts, and dedication in providing care to the population.
- **Fondo Semillas**, for their vital and rapid support through their Emergency Fund, enabling us to reach further into the region and closer to communities and families.
- The Sindicato de Trabajadores Académicos de la Universidad Autónoma Chapingo (STAUACH), for their donations and facilitation that allowed aid to reach families.
- Collection centers and individual donors: **“La Nana” Laboratorio Urbano de Arte Comprometido** in Mexico City; Rural Sociology Department (DESOR), **Universidad Autónoma Chapingo** in Texcoco; **Fundación Arturo Herrera Cabañas** in Pachuca; neighbors in the **central neighborhoods of Tulancingo**; Ximai Radio with neighbors from La Lagunilla and San Salvador in Valle del Mezquital; and **La Chicha restaurant** in Roma Norte, Mexico City.

Your solidarity has woven a stronger support network and made clear that the path toward reconstruction is best traveled together. Thank you.

get in touch!

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🌐 psydeh.org

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